

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell, Eliza Symonds Bell, Carrie Bell, 1871, with transcript

Copy of a brief note from Alexander Graham Bell to his parents, evidently written in June or July, 1871. (Original in Dr. Bell's handwriting on file in "Dr. Bell's Room" in "Deaf Child"). Dear Papa, Mama and Carrie:

This seems to me most valuable evidence of the use of the system — being the testimony of a totally deaf young lady. She wrote the Composition entirely without aid.

### Valedictory Address

Composed by Miss Alice C. Jennings and delivered by Miss Isabel Flagg at the Exhibition of the Boston Deaf-Mute School.

When one has received great benefit from a particular course of instruction it is only just that he should acknowledge it; and it is on this principle of gratitude that I would say a few words in praise of the system of Visible Speech. I think it greatly superior to the old system, for it removes many difficulties and enables the pupil to give different sounds with much greater correctness. When a teacher merely makes a sound without representing it in any way, it is extremely difficult for a pupil to give it perfectly without the aid of hearing. But, by the use of symbols he can see at a glance what is to be done and how to do it. When we use the symbols, we think more of the position of the tongue and lips and consequently, we are more likely to give the true sound. A single sound perfectly learned is worth a dozen imperfect ones — and it often happens that one sound forms the key to several others. All this requires patience and perseverance on the part of both teacher and pupil but it is not as tedious as a casual observer might be apt to think. We have an object

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in view which renders all our labor 2 light. To speak well and fluently is certainly worthy of our ambition. "Language is the drapery for clothing our thoughts" and unless it is gracefully adjusted the thought expressed will lose half its beauty. The practice of syllables to which no meaning is attached may seem disagreeable, but it sustains the same relation to speech that scales and exercises do to music. I do not profess to understand this system in all its details, but I am fully convinced that in its invention Prof. Bell has rendered a most invaluable service to the afflicted class to which I belong. I think the Committee will see a much greater improvement in the course of a few months than now, and the wisdom of giving the scholars this opportunity of trying the System, will be more apparent then, than it now is.

On behalf of the school I would most cordially thank the Committee for giving us this opportunity, and I trust we shall derive so much profit from the use of the system that its introduction will never be regretted.